

6. NEW BIRD RECORDS FOR SAURASHTRA

1. Red Kite [*Milvus milvus* (Linnaeus)]

On 23-3-64 at a lake near Jasdan I saw a Red Kite, *Milvus milvus* (Linnaeus), sitting on the mudflat. The lighter-coloured head, dark-streaked brown breast, and rufous underparts and tail were distinctive and put it apart from the Common Pariah Kites which were also there. I was able to watch the bird for 15 minutes through binoculars before it flew off on my going closer. The only other record for India is that of Dr. Sálím Ali at Pung Bet in the Rann of Kutch where over 50 were observed in March 1945.

2. Large Crowned Leaf Warbler [*Phylloscopus occipitalis* (Blyth)]

During the BNHS/WHO Bird Migration Study camp at Hingolghadh in September 1963, a single Large Crowned Leaf Warbler [*Phylloscopus occipitalis* (Blyth)] was caught in a mist net on 19-9-63. This bird has been recorded from Gujarat but there are no records of its occurrence in Saurashtra.

3. Masked Wagtail (*Motacilla alba personata* Gould)

On 9-1-1964 I saw a Masked Wagtail (*Motacilla alba personata* Gould) at Jasdan. This bird has not been previously recorded from Saurashtra.

THE PALACE,

JASDAN,

February 23, 1964.

Y. S. SHIVRAJKUMAR

7. SOME NOTES ON THE PAINTED PARTRIDGE
[*FRANCOLINUS PICTUS* (JARDINE & SELBY)] AROUND
BOMBAY

The Painted Partridge [*Francolinus pictus* (Jardine & Selby)] is resident in the Bombay Konkan and is the only game bird which affords regular sport in that area. As little or nothing has been noted about its food and other habits, the few notes which I have retained over many years may be worthwhile recording.

This bird ordinarily lives in heavier cover than the Grey Partridge (*F. pondicerianus*) which does not occur in the Konkan and is only found beyond the Ghats in the Deccan. Unlike the Grey Partridge, it does not collect in coveys. When approached, unlike the Grey and

the Black (*F. francolinus*), it does not run along the ground from bush to bush through open country, but squats in cover, often unbelievably scanty. It calls only during the courting and breeding season, the earliest calls noted being on 8 and 15 April and the last on 4, 7, and 15 October¹. The call, which is uttered only by the male, has been syllabified as *chee-kee-kerrag* and can be heard at long distances. At short range a preliminary *click* is audible. The bird may call at any time of the day, though more often in the morning and in the evening. The call is uttered, in our area at least, only from trees or other prominent positions—I have heard it calling from an electric pylon. When calling it can usually be approached, and I fear that some are shot in this manner.

The Small Game Season in Maharashtra is from 1 October to 31 March which, in my opinion, is correct for this species. Though all the broods may not be fully grown in October, it is impossible to do any shooting until the rice has been harvested and the grass also cut, i.e. by early December, when young birds with yellow legs are rarely seen. In February and March, two birds may occasionally be put up out of the same patch, but I do not think that they pair off so soon. In the Deccan the Grey Partridge and the Common Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*) commence breeding by February and the Small Game Season, which is now common for all birds, will have to be adjusted.

Though larger bags have been reported, the Painted Partridge is not easily put up and 10-12 brace to 2 or 3 guns is the most I have seen shot. They offer excellent sport but can only be put up with a line of beaters, who must really 'beat about the bush'. Famous dogs, brought out by friends, have quickly and invariably produced a strong desire in all, except the owner, to shoot them!

Before the restrictions imposed under the Bombay Wild Animals and Wild Birds Protection Act, 1951, large numbers were netted for the market in the surrounding countryside, resulting in a heavy toll of their numbers. With such control as it has been possible to exercise over the activities of the Phansi Pardas (a tribe of professional trappers) the number of birds has no doubt increased, but this has been largely off-set by deforestation and the disappearance of scrub cover. In many places where it was once possible to have a long beat of 300 or 400 yards, only a few stray bushes are left forcing the birds to move further away.

¹ Heard on 5 November 1964.—H. A.

Some years ago I was struck by the occasional disparity in the number of males and females in the day's bag, e.g. of 17 birds shot over 6 days in different places between October and February, 14 were males. I therefore decided to check further bags but, as 10 shot in December included 6 males and another 10 in January were 5 males and 5 females, my inquiry was suspended until another day when of 15 birds sexed 11 were males.

A few notes of one day's shooting are as under:

		♂♂	♀♀
11 shot in December at	M :	10	1
10 do.	M :	2	8
5 shot in March at	A :	..	5
3 do.	B :	1	2
5 do.	C :	2	3
5 do.	D :	1	4

The overall figures for 220 sexed at 31 shoots showed 113 males and 107 females. Though this did not indicate any disproportionate number of males and females, I sent the above-quoted figures to Mr. S. D. Jayakar, Genetics and Biometry Laboratory, Bhubaneswar. From his reply it appears that the numbers are not consistent with random sampling and that one would get such a scatter of ratios by chance less than once in a hundred trials. A possible explanation is that males prefer one area at one time and females another, though it is difficult to imagine why this should be. Here is a problem to which shikaris may give some attention. The female can ordinarily be told by the chin being white and less heavily streaked than the male, but this is not infallible and the only certain method is to sex the bird by dissection.

There is another interesting observation about the Painted Partridge. The country where it is found also holds the Jungle Bush Quail (*Perdica asiatica*) and the Bluelegged or Common Bustard Quail (*Turnix suscitator*) and, during the season, the Grey Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and the Rain Quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*). The beat may produce any of these birds, but a few years ago I noticed that, if a patch held Bush Quail, no Painted Partridge would be present. I have had this in mind over several seasons and can now confidently state that these two will not be found in the same cover. Considering that the other quails may often be found with the Painted Partridge, one can only assume that there is some form of antipathy between the Painted Partridge and the Jungle Bush Quail. It may happen that a patch beaten in the morning may produce either the

Bush Quail or the Painted Partridge and, worked over again later, would reveal the exact reverse—but never the two together. I have seen the Bustard Quail beaten out of the same patch as the Bush Quail. It would be interesting to have the experience of persons from other parts of the country.

The main crop in the Konkan is rice and there is no doubt that this forms an important part of the food of this bird. The best sport is also available in rice stubble adjoining scrub jungle. It will not be found far from fresh water and has often been put up out of tall rushes during the course of snipe shoots—Job's Tears (*Coix lachrymajobi*) seeds have been found in its stomach. There is some local migration due presumably to conditions of food and cover. Paddy gleanings form its staple diet in November, December, and January, though a greater proportion of large black ants (*Camponotus* sp.), Chrysomelid Beetles (*Aulacophora foveicollis*, 30-40 at a time), and large Pentatomid Bugs (*Aspongopus janus*) is taken later in the season. A large Tenebrionid beetle (*Pseudoblaps mellyi* Mal.) was found in December.

I have also been shown small 'canopies' 8 to 10 inches high formed by constant use in patches of standing dry grass which are said to be roosts of individual partridges. The last one examined held 6 to 8 droppings, and a partridge was flushed a short distance away.

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July 2, 1964.

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

8. ADDITIONS TO THE BIRDS OF KUTCH : *MONARCHA AZUREA* (BODDAERT) AND *MUSCICAPA THALASSINA* SWAINSON

The countryside surrounding the Vijaya Vilas Palace at Mandvi, which includes the plantation around the palace, other cultivated gardens, the sea-shore, the salt-water creeks, and the mudflats, is a veritable paradise for bird watchers, particularly during the cold weather. In January this year I was again lucky to discover two new birds in the garden there.